OFFICE OF **CHALLENGE GRANTS**

HUMANITIES ACCESS GRANTS

Deadline: May 3, 2017

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 45.130

If after reading this document you have questions about this grant program, contact the staff of NEH's Office of Challenge Grants at 202-606-8309 or at challenge@neh.gov. Applicants who are deaf or hard of hearing can contact NEH via Federal Relay (TTY users) at 800-877-8399.

Contents

I. Program Description

Humanities Access grants help support capacity building for humanities programs that benefit one or more of the following groups: **children, family, and young adults** (defined to include those between ages 18 and 30).

Humanities Access grants provide funding for existing programs at institutions such as public libraries, local and regional museums, historical societies, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, archival repositories, and other cultural organizations.

Programs supported by Humanities Access grants have included, for example

- a young readers' initiative sponsored by a state humanities council;
- a "family conversations" program at a rural historical society connecting the area's cultural and natural resources; and
- internships for students at a liberal arts college to work in local cultural organizations during the summer.

Humanities Access Grants offer **two years of match-based funding. All funds must be expended by the end of the grant period**. Humanities Access grant funds should not be used to replace existing program funds. Instead, the grant should expand or enhance an existing exemplary humanities program.

Institutions that have never received an NEH grant and small to mid-sized institutions are especially encouraged to apply.

Activities supported

As noted above, Humanities Access grants support humanities programs—that is, programs that seek to understand and explain the significance of what people have thought, done, and achieved, both in the past and in our time. To be a bit more specific, humanities fields explore topics like these: the philosophy, literature, art, and music that people create; the battles that they fight; the polities and societies in which they live; the social forces that unite and divide them; the work that they do; and the religions in which they believe. Humanities fields approach topics like these primarily by means of qualitative (interpretive, critical, speculative, historical) methods rather than exclusively by means of quantitative methods.

You can find a list of some of the humanities fields (the list is not comprehensive) in the legislation that created the National Endowment for the Humanities (the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act, 1965): "The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life."

Institutions may use federal Humanities Access grant funds, combined with the required matching amount, to support one or more of their existing programs. Award recipients might use this fund to support ongoing humanities programmatic costs such as the following:

- salaries and benefits for humanities personnel;
- acquisitions for collections;
- public programming and outreach expenses;
- lecture or exhibition series;
- media or digitization costs;
- faculty, teacher, and staff development;
- research fellowships;[1]
- visiting researchers, scholars, or consultants;
- programs for preserving and conserving collections; or
- strengthening the technological infrastructure for humanities projects.

Note, though, that activities like these are eligible for support only if they benefit one or more of the following groups: children, families, and young adults.

Expenditures not eligible for support

Humanities Access grant funds, federal or nonfederal, may not be used for

- construction or renovation of facilities;
- programs that seek to promote a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view;
- programs that advocate social action; or
- programs designed for activities outside the scope of the humanities, such as the creation of art works, the performing arts, science education, non-humanistic aspects of the social sciences, or public policy advocacy. Projects that deal with the visual or performing arts

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[1] Applicants proposing to fund fellowships with a Humanities Access grant must ensure the fair and informed selection of fellowship recipients by relying on the recommendations of an external committee composed of qualified humanities scholars drawn from outside the institution's staff and governing bodies. The committee should meet in person or virtually, and all members should be replaced each year. NEH recommends a committee of five; three is the minimum.

Grantee institutions are responsible for avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest in the composition of the selection committee and its deliberations. Staff, officers, board members, and trustees of the institution may not serve as voting members on committees that review applications for fellowship awards funded by Humanities Access grants. The same restrictions apply to staff, officers, and trustees of parent organizations.

are eligible for Humanities Access grant funding only if they enhance the interpretation or analysis of the artistic form in question, using critical, historical, theoretical, or other humanities perspectives. Projects in the social sciences must use humanistic (qualitative) methods.

The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square

NEH welcomes proposals related to its initiative, The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square. This initiative seeks to connect the study of the humanities to the current conditions of national life. Many of today's challenges require more than ever the forms of understanding and knowledge represented by the humanities. They require the broadest possible engagement of scholars and the public with the resources of the humanities, including but not limited to the study of language, literature, history, philosophy, comparative religion, and ethics. The study of the humanities can help illuminate the complexity of many contemporary challenges while enriching our understanding of the common good.

Note that the Common Good initiative incorporates the Standing Together initiative, which encourages projects related to war and military service.

NEH will give equal consideration to all applications in accordance with the program's evaluation criteria, whether or not they respond to the Common Good initiative or the Standing Together initiative.

Award information

NEH will offer successful applicants a one-to-one matching grant of either $50,000 or $100,000 divided evenly over the first two years of the three-year grant. The grant amount that applicants request should be appropriate to the humanities needs and the fundraising capacity of the institution.

Successful applicants must raise contributions from nonfederal third parties and have them certified before NEH will release the grant funds to the grantee (see NEH's Federal Matching Funds Guidelines).

As a guide, these are the year-by-year breakdowns:

	Year 1	Year 2	Final
NEH	$25,000	$25,000	$50,000
Match	$25,000	$25,000	$50,000
Combined	$50,000	$50,000	$100,000

	Year 1	Year 2	Final
NEH	$50,000	$50,000	$100,000
Match	$50,000	$50,000	$100,000
Combined	$100,000	$100,000	$200,000

If sufficient donations are not raised in any given year, the federal offer for that year may have to be forfeited. The forfeiture of some or all federal funds in any given year proportionately reduces the total matching requirement.

The Humanities Access grant period begins May 1, 2017 and ends September 30, 2020. Annual certification of gifts is due no later than May 1, 2018; and May 1, 2019.

Eligibility

U.S. nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status are eligible, as are state and local governmental agencies and federally recognized Indian tribal governments. The program that you would like to support through this grant must be a humanities program. Institutions that are part of a larger institution (for example, a university museum) should consult with NEH staff on questions of separate eligibility.

NEH generally does not award grants to other federal entities or to applicants whose projects are so closely intertwined with a federal entity that the project takes on characteristics of the federal entity's own authorized activities. This does not preclude applicants from using grant funds from, or sites and materials controlled by, other federal entities in their projects.

Individuals are not eligible to apply.

Grantees may not use funds from other federal entities to match NEH grants.

Institutions may apply for only one Humanities Access grant in a calendar year.

Applicants to the Humanities Access Grants program may also apply for and receive grants from the Next Generation Humanities PhD Planning and Implementation Grants programs, as well as the Creating Humanities Communities program, provided that meet the other programs' eligibility requirements.

Current recipients of Humanities Access Grants (with grant numbers beginning ZH) are not eligible to reapply to the program until one fiscal year after the end of their grants.

Current recipients of regular Challenge Grants (with grant numbers beginning CH) are not eligible to apply to the Humanities Access Grants program until three fiscal years after the end of their grants. Current recipients of Challenge Grants for Two-Year Colleges (with grant numbers beginning CZ) are not eligible to apply to the Humanities Access Grants program until one fiscal year after the end of their grants.

NEH will not review late, incomplete, or ineligible applications.

II. Preparing and Organizing your Application

Resources for preparing a strong application

To prepare a strong application, applicants are encouraged to take the following steps:

- read these **guidelines** carefully, noting what information needs to be provided in the application;
- review the **sample narratives**, which are available on the program resource page;
- consult the program's **evaluation criteria**, which are listed immediately below;
- read the **Frequently Asked Questions**, which are available on the program resource page;
- contact the **program staff** (at 202-606-8309 or challenge@neh.gov) to discuss your project and raise any questions you may have about the application; and
- submit an optional **draft proposal** (by April 5, 2017), to which program staff will respond with suggestions and advice.

Evaluation criteria

Applications are evaluated according to the criteria listed immediately below, and the narrative should clearly address these criteria.

1. **Significance of humanities activities and impact**

   How will grant funds strengthen and improve the understanding of the humanities on the part of children, families, and young adults? Are the planned activities well-thought-out? Is their intellectual quality high?

2. **Appropriateness of resources and plans**

   Is the institution, through its mission, personnel, governance, facilities, and resources, capable of sustaining outstanding activities in the humanities? What evidence (such as letters of commitment and support) is there of sufficient institutional and community commitment to the plans? Are the planned grant expenditures (federal and nonfederal combined) described clearly and in detail?

3. **Fundraising and evaluation strategy**

   Is a sound fundraising plan in place? How will the institution assess the impact of this grant?

As noted earlier, before they submit a proposal applicants are encouraged to contact program officers, who can offer advice about preparing the proposal and review preliminary proposal drafts. **Draft proposals are not required, but you are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this preliminary review.** A draft should include the full narrative section of the application and the proposed budget; prospective applicants should send the draft directly by e-mail attachment to challenge@neh.gov. Please submit this document no later than April 5, 2017. NEH staff may not be able to review drafts submitted after this date.

Staff comments on draft proposals are not part of the formal review process and have no bearing on the final outcome of the application. Once NEH has received a formal application, the staff will not comment on its status except with respect to questions of completeness or eligibility.

Application elements

The application consists of a narrative, a budget, the project director's biography and (if appropriate) job descriptions for positions to be created as a result of the grant, letters of commitment and support, and supplementary materials. The font size should be no smaller than eleven-point. All pages should have at least one-inch margins, should be collated, and should be numbered consecutively throughout.

1. **Narrative**

Narrative descriptions are limited to **five single-spaced pages**. Your application should be free of jargon and accessible to nonspecialists.

In the narrative, you should address the following points in this order:

- o Describe the humanities activity or program that the grant would support, including its genesis, history, and goals. Include evidence of the program's significant humanities content and intellectual value.

- o Discuss the connection between the humanities activities and the needs and capacities of one or more of the following groups: children, families, or young adults. Include information about previous efforts by your institution to reach and serve these groups. If the proposal relates to the NEH Common Good and/or Standing Together initiative, explain its relevance in this portion of the narrative.

- o Explain how the institution, through its mission, personnel, governance, facilities, and resources, has been and will be capable of sustaining outstanding humanities activities over the long term. Identify any collaborators or partners.

- o Describe the institution's fundraising strategy to achieve the required match in Years 1 and 2 of the grant, and delineate clearly and in detail the planned grant expenditures (federal and nonfederal combined) in the second and third years of the grant.

- o Provide a plan for assessing and measuring, in both qualitative and quantitative terms as appropriate, the impact of the grant.

2. **Budget**

Using the Humanities Access Grants sample budget (PDF) as a model, complete the Humanities Access Grants budget form (MS Excel). Instructions for the various budget categories are available on both the sample budget and the budget form. Both the sample budget and the budget form are available on the program resource page.

Please note: in March 2018 NEH will host a workshop in Washington, DC, for Humanities Access Grants project directors. Please include a line item for this expense in the budget, under travel costs.

If the applicant institution is claiming indirect costs, submit a copy of its current federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement. Do not attach the agreement to your budget form. Instead you must attach it to the Budget Narrative Attachment Form (also known as the Budget Narrative File). (See the instructions for this form in the Application Checklist near the end of this document.) Alternatively, you must attach a statement to the form, explaining a) that the applicant institution is not claiming indirect costs; b) that the applicant institution does not currently have a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement; or c) that the applicant institution is using the government-wide rate of up to 10 percent of the total direct costs, less distorting items (including but not limited to capital expenditures, participant stipends, fellowships, and the portion of each subgrant or subcontract in excess of $25,000).

You should submit your budget in a font of at least eleven points. Your budget must be free of mathematical errors.

3. **Project director biography and (if appropriate) job descriptions**

The project director is the person primarily responsible for implementing the humanities activities described in the narrative proposal. Attach a **two-paragraph version** of this person's biography as an appendix to the application. You should also attach job descriptions for any positions being supported by the Humanities Access grant.

4. **Letters of commitment and support**

Include in an appendix **no more than five** letters of commitment and support from institutional administrators or funders, participants in or beneficiaries of the proposed humanities activities, partners, experts in the field, or staff involved in carrying out the humanities activities. Letters from the applicant's Congressional representatives or Senators are not appropriate for a Humanities Access Grant application.

5. **Supplementary materials**

Prepare a PDF document of no more than twenty pages that contains examples (flyers, brochures, other descriptive materials) of current and previous activities from collaborating and partner organizations. Include a table of contents. Use the document's first page to explain briefly the relevance of materials to the proposal.

All such materials must be part of the digital application package submitted through Grants.gov. Do not mail or otherwise deliver materials to NEH.

III. Submitting your Application

To be able to submit an application, applicants must have registered with Grants.gov and must have an updated Entity record in the System for Award Management (SAM). You can find more detailed information immediately below.

All applications to this program must be submitted via Grants.gov. NEH strongly recommends and that you complete or verify your Grants.gov registration at least two weeks before the application deadline, since it takes time to process your registration.

You can find links to the Grants.gov application package and instructions for preparing and submitting five of the six forms included in the package on the program resource page. (The instructions for completing the sixth form are beneath the next heading.)

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires federal agencies to make information about the expenditure of tax funds available to the public. To facilitate this, an applicant organization must maintain current information in its Entity record in the System for Award Management (SAM). You must therefore review and update the information in your organization's Entity record at least annually after the initial registration, and more frequently if required by changes in your organization's information or another award term. In order for your organization to apply for an award via Grants.gov, receive an award, or receive payment on an award, the information in its Entity record must be current. You can update your organization's Entity record here. You may need a new SAM User Account to register your organization or update its Entity record. NEH strongly recommends that applicants update (or, if necessary, create) their SAM Entity records at least four weeks before the application deadline.

Instructions for completing the NEH Matching Request Form

As the form states, you must indicate the fiscal years in which you are requesting funds; fiscal years begin on October 1 and end the following September 30. The relevant dates on which matching requests will be made to NEH are the certification dates, which are discussed earlier in these guidelines: the certification dates are May 1, 2018 (which is in fiscal year 2018), and May 1, 2019 (which is in fiscal year 2019).

As a result, the completed form will contain rows for the two years 2018 and 2019. After you fill out the row for 2018, click on the "Add Year" button to add a row for the second year (2019).

For each of these years, provide the information requested in columns A, B, C, and D. The amount requested in Column A (Request from NEH) should equal the amount in Column B (Non-federal third-party gifts). For Column C (Cost share), put 0 (zero). For column D, the NEH required match ratio is one-to-one (1:1).

After you have provided the information for the two years of the grant in which fundraising will occur, the numbers in the "TOTAL" row will appear automatically.

Be sure to read the document (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application. It is your responsibility as an applicant to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application.

Deadlines for submitting optional draft proposals and applications

You are welcome to contact the Office of Challenge Grants to seek advice about preparing the proposal. **Draft proposals are optional, but applicants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this preliminary review.** A draft should include the full narrative section of the application and the proposed budget; send it by e-mail attachment to challenge@neh.gov. Please submit this document no later than April 5, 2017. NEH staff may not be able to review drafts submitted after that date.

Grants.gov must receive applications on or before May 3, 2017. Grants.gov will date- and time-stamp applications after they are fully uploaded. Grants.gov will not accept applications submitted after that date.

IV. What Happens After the Submission of an Application

Review and selection process

Knowledgeable persons outside NEH will read each application and advise the agency about its merits. NEH staff comments on matters of fact or on significant issues that otherwise would be missing from these reviews, then makes recommendations to the National Council on the Humanities. The National Council meets at various times during the year to advise the NEH chairman on grants. The chairman takes into account the advice provided by the review process and, by law, makes all funding decisions. More details about NEH's review process are available here.

Prior to making an award, NEH will conduct a risk assessment of successful applicants, consistent with Uniform Guidance §200.205. (See two paragraphs below the next heading for more information about the Uniform Guidance provided by the Office of Management and Budget.) This assessment guards against the risk that federal financial assistance might be wasted, used fraudulently, or abused. Based on its risk assessment, NEH will include in the award documents specific conditions designed to mitigate the effects of the risk.

Information for all applicants and for successful applicants

In early December, approximately seven months after the application deadline, NEH will notify applicants by e-mail whether they will be offered a Humanities Access grant. Institutional grants administrators and project directors of successful applications will receive award documents by e-mail in December 2017. Award documents will identify the relevant terms, conditions, and administrative requirements that pertain to successful applications. The Grant Management section of the NEH website outlines all the responsibilities of award recipients, including anti-lobbying restrictions, in great detail. Applicants may obtain the evaluations of their applications by sending an e-mail message to challenge@neh.gov.

In September 2015 NEH adopted without exception a new government-wide regulation for federal awards, referred to as the "Uniform Guidance." The Uniform Guidance applies to all

NEH awards to organizations and is aimed at reducing the administrative burden on award recipients and improving accountability of federal financial assistance for tax payers. (See 2 C.F.R. Part 200: *UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL AWARDS*.) NEH will identify in each grantee's award documents the relevant terms, conditions, and administrative requirements from the Uniform Guidance with which the grantee must comply.

Help NEH eliminate fraud and improve management by providing information about allegations or suspicions of waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, research misconduct (fabrication, falsification, plagiarism), or unnecessary government expenditures, during the period of award performance, to the NEH Office of the Inspector General. You can find details on how to report such allegations and suspicions here.

V. Additional Information

Contact information for the program and Grants.gov

If you have questions about the program, contact:

Office of Challenge Grants
National Endowment for the Humanities
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506
202-606-8309
challenge@neh.gov

Grants.gov: www.grants.gov
Grants.gov help desk: support@grants.gov
Grants.gov customer support tutorials and manuals:
http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-tools-and-tips.html
Grants.gov support line: 1-800-518-GRANTS (4726)

Privacy policy

Information in these guidelines is solicited under the authority of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, as amended, 20 U.S.C. 956. The principal purpose for which the information will be used is to process the grant application. The information may also be used for statistical research, analysis of trends, and Congressional oversight. Failure to provide the information may result in the delay or rejection of the application.

Application completion time

The Office of Management and Budget requires federal agencies to supply information on the time needed to complete forms and also to invite comments on the paperwork burden. NEH estimates that the average time to complete this application is fifteen hours per response. This estimate includes time for reviewing instructions, researching, gathering, and maintaining the information needed, and completing and reviewing the application.

Please send any comments regarding the estimated completion time or any other aspect of this application, including suggestions for reducing the completion time, to the Chief Guidelines Officer, at guidelines@neh.gov; the Office of Publications, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. 20506; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (3136-0134), Washington, D.C. 20503. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

☐ **Verify and if necessary update your institution's Entity record, or create an Entity record for your institution, at the System for Award Management (SAM).** Complete at least four weeks before the deadline.

☐ **Verify your institution's registration or register your institution with Grants.gov.** Complete at least two weeks before deadline.

☐ **Download the application package from Grants.gov, or access it through Grants.gov Workspace.** The program resource page on NEH's website has a direct link to the package. (Note that Grants.gov tells you to download the "application instruction" as well as the "application package." The "application instruction" is this document, so there is no need to download it.) Alternatively, you can search Grants.gov for this program. The program resource page also has a direct link to the instructions for completing five of the six forms in the package. (Instructions for the NEH Matching Request Form are above.)

☐ **Complete the following forms contained in the Grants.gov application package.**

1. Application for Federal Domestic Assistance - Short Organizational

2. Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs

3. NEH Matching Request Form

4. Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form

5. Attachments Form—Using this form, attach the parts of your application as described in the guidelines:

   ATTACHMENT 1: Narrative (name the file "narrative.pdf")

   ATTACHMENT 2: Budget (name the file "budget.pdf")

   ATTACHMENT 3: Project director's biography and (if appropriate) job descriptions for any positions to be created as a result of the grant (name the file "bio.pdf")

   ATTACHMENT 4: Letters of commitment and support (name the file "letters.pdf")

   ATTACHMENT 5: Supplementary materials (name the file "supplementary.pdf")

6. Budget Narrative Attachment Form (also known as the Budget Narrative File)— Using this form, attach **only** a copy of your institution's current federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement (or an explanation why you are not attaching such an agreement). (See the Grants.gov instructions for institutional applicants, which are available on the program resource page, for additional information.)

   Do not attach your application budget to the Budget Narrative Attachment form; instead you must attach it to the Attachments Form (see above in the Application Checklist), as attachment 2.

Your attachments must be in Portable Document Format (.pdf). We cannot accept attachments in their original word processing or spreadsheet formats. If you do not already have software to convert your files into PDFs, many low-cost and free software packages will do so. You can learn more about converting documents into PDFs here.

Upload your application to Grants.gov. NEH **strongly** suggests that you submit your application no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the day of the deadline. Doing so will leave you time to contact the Grants.gov help desk for support, should you encounter a technical problem of some kind. The Grants.gov help desk is now available seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day (except on federal holidays), at 1-800-518-4726. You can also send an e-mail message to support@grants.gov.

Be sure to read the document (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application. It is your responsibility as an applicant to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application.

TIMELINE

Until May 3, 2017: Contact Office of Challenge Grants program officers (at 202-606-8309 or challenge@neh.gov) with questions and for advice (optional)

April 5, 2017: Submit draft application (optional) by this date

April 5, 2017: Create or verify your institution's Entity record at the System for Award Management by this date

April 19, 2017: Register your institution (or verify its registration) with Grants.gov by this date

May 3, 2017: Submit application through Grants.gov by this date

July 2017: Peer review panels take place

November 2017: meeting of the National Council on the Humanities, followed by funding decisions

December 2017: applicants are notified of the funding decisions

December 2017: institutional grants administrators and project directors of successful applications receive award documents by e-mail

May 1: annual date after notification by which the grantee must submit certification of the gifts required to claim the year's installment of federal funds